

## TELEGRAPHIC PERFINS - "What Hath God Wrought?"

Roy Gault

The dictionary definition of "Telegraph" reads - *a device, system, or process by which information can be transmitted over a distance, originally by sending coded electrical signals along a transmission line (or wire), but now by using radio signals (i.e. wireless).*

**Tele** - at or over a distance.

**Graph** - an instrument that writes or records.

Although a number of inventors contributed to the idea of an electric telegraph, it was Samuel Finley Breese Morse (1791-1872) who made the first practical model and transmitted the first official message on 24th May 1844 - "What hath God wrought?" - from Washington D.C. to Baltimore, a distance of some 40 miles.



Typical "Morse" transmitter key.



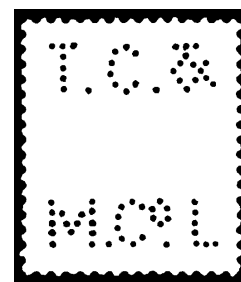
Morse also invented the transmission code named after him, perhaps the most well known use of which is "SOS".

• • • — — — • • •

The earliest reference I can find to 'Telegraphy' in terms of Perfins is *The Telegraph Construction & Maintenance Co Ltd*, in Old Broad St, London EC, who are thought to have used this early Sloper die.

For example, it was "Telcon" who manufactured the cable used by Brunel's *Great Eastern* to lay a transatlantic cable in 1866.

1869-1901



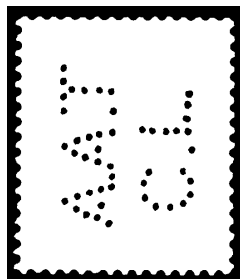
T1000.01

Other companies involved in the ‘Telegraphy’ business using Perfins.

***The Anglo-American Telegraph Co Ltd, London.***

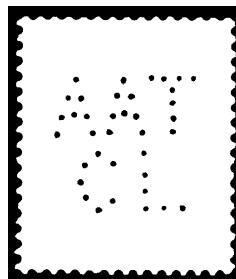
It is known for sure that the company used the later die, so it’s reasonable to suggest that they also used the earlier die.

1895-1900



A0315.01

1900-1910

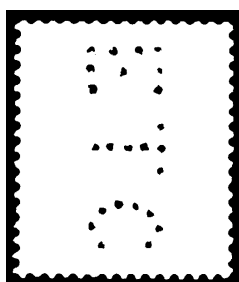


A0310.02

***The Eastern Telegraph Co Ltd, London.***

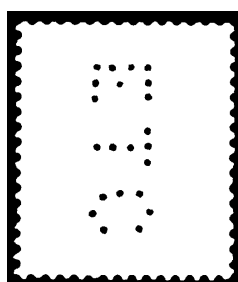
The first two patterns illustrated here are ‘SPG’ types, and known to have been produced by Waterlow & Sons Ltd.

1895-1906



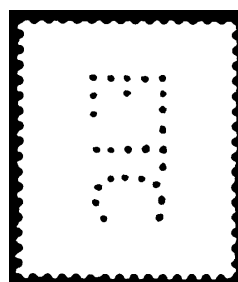
E4700.07v

1906-1917



E4700.03v

1917-1930

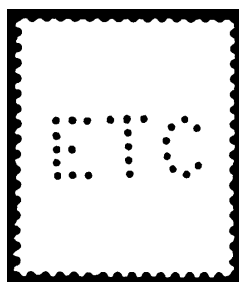


E4700.05

***The Exchange Telegraph Co, 36/7 Queen St, London EC4.***

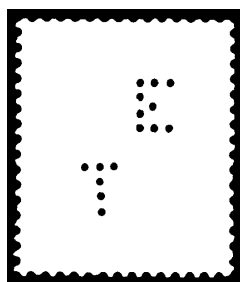
A long-standing customer of J Sloper & Co Ltd from c1905, through the ‘Wartime Provisional’ period, and into the ‘modern era’.

1905-1941



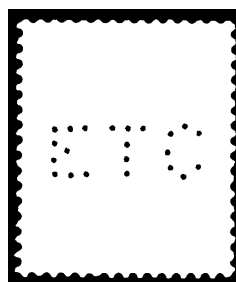
E4700.02

1941-1945



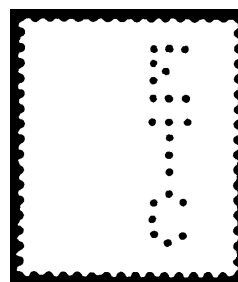
E4760.01p

1957-1980



E4700.01

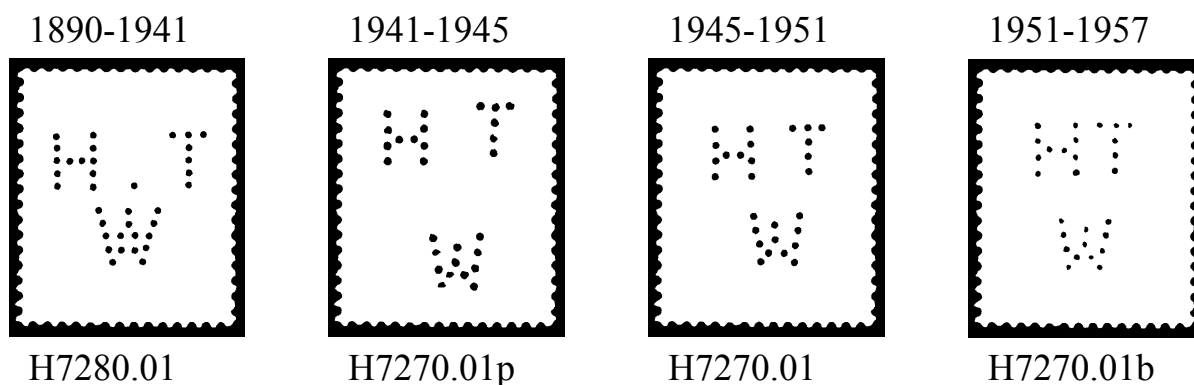
1954-1960



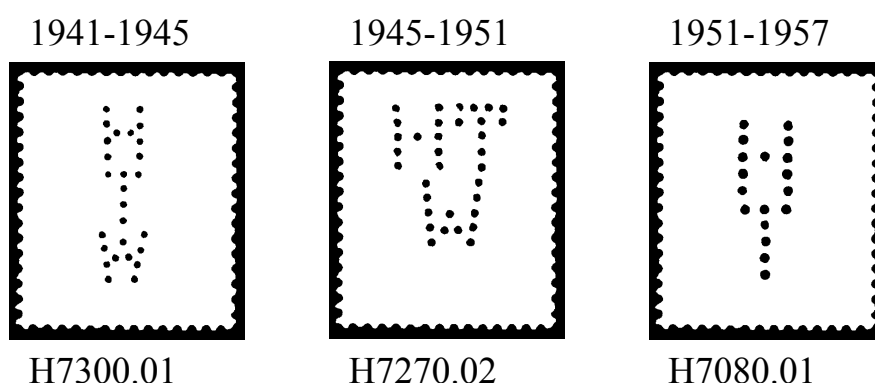
E4720.01

A prolific perfin user was *W T Henley's Telegraph Works Co Ltd*, who used seven different dies, although others may await discovery.

The following were initialled by J Sloper & Co, the first of which (a multiheaded die with 4 patterns) was destroyed in the “Blitz” on Sloper’s premises in May 1941.



However, stamps were also initialled on W T Henley’s own premises using machines taking vertical delivery coils.



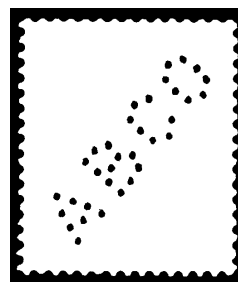
Other Telegraph companies known to have used perfins include:

*Marconi's Wireless Telegraph Co Ltd, London WC2.*  
*The Western Telegraph Co Ltd, London EC2.*  
*The Western Union Telegraph Co, Liverpool and London.*

The ‘Telegraphic Address’ of a company allowed the message to be delivered to the intended recipient. Often this ‘code’ took the form of the initials of the company (as with a perfin), but partial or full names are probably more likely to be encountered. The *Perfins* on the next page are also the ‘*Telegraphic Address*’ of the company involved.

**Arthur Brown & Co,**  
Bevis Marks House, London EC3.  
T.A. “**ABCO**”.

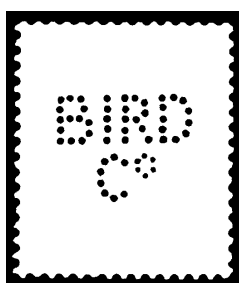
1925-1939



A0590.01

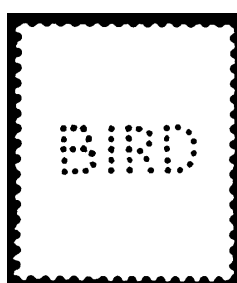
This next company started off life as *William Bird & Co*, Iron Merchants & Engineers, London EC, but became *Bolling & Lowe* in 1873, and *Bolling & Lowe (Overseas) Ltd* in 1880. Notwithstanding the name changes, the T.A. “**BIRD**” remained the same.

1869-1873



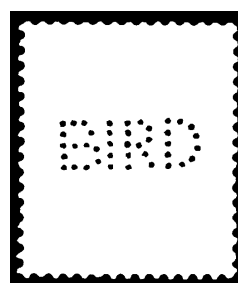
B3695.01

1873-1886



B3690.02

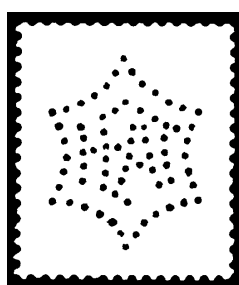
1890-1935



B3690.01

The following two are interesting in that they relate to the business activity of each company - ‘**HEAT**’ is even a ‘Trade Mark’.

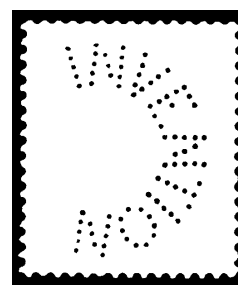
1905-1965



H2240.01m



1885-1895



I1850.01

**Jones & Attwood Ltd**, Heating Engineers, Stourbridge - T.A. “**HEAT**”.  
**Redfern & Co**, Patent Agents, London EC - T.A. “**INVENTION**”.

Note: This list is not exhaustive - others to look out for include:

**Birkbeck, Broil, Chubb, Ediswan, Eley, Esso, Flour, Indo, Keen, Lafayette, Maple, Oyez, Print, Sage, Spero, Wipa,**  
and no doubt many, many more!

By 1868, the private Telegraph Companies in the U.K. had developed the telegraph service in large part by using the railway companies' trackside telegraph lines. But in 1869/1870 the telegraph service was 'nationalised', and special 'Telegraph' stamps were introduced in 1876, mainly for accounting purposes. Their use was discontinued just five years later, in 1881. Here are a selection of Telegraph stamps with perfins, although the perfins do not show up too well in black & white!



Telegraph stamps with Telegraphic addresses as Perfins are likely to be a rare category. Only three have so far been identified - **CORY** and **CURRIE** are shown here, with the third being **HUTH**.



And finally, there is a tenuous link between perfins and telegraphy! A certain **Henry Harborow** worked for Joseph Sloper from at least 1865. It was he who fitted out the first recorded initialling m/c for postage stamps in 1868. Although his name disappears from the Sloper records in 1873, he is recorded in the 1881 census as, you guessed it,

**a Telegraph Instrument Maker!**

I would think Henry simply served his apprenticeship with Sloper's before 'making it good' on his own, so over to you, John Matthews!